

**T**he third trimester begins at 26 and two-thirds weeks and ends with the delivery of your baby. Take a childbirth preparation class. Tour your hospital's labor and delivery area. Finalize your home preparations. Now is a good time to learn all you can about contraception so that you and your partner can decide what would be right for you after the baby arrives. Spacing children is important to your health and to theirs. Experts recommend that women give themselves time to heal by waiting at least six months before becoming pregnant again. Short birth intervals can lead to preterm birth and/or a low birth weight baby. The ideal spacing for the good health of the mother and the children would be to wait 18 to 23 months before becoming pregnant again.



### 18 Third Trimester Discomforts and Comfort Measures for Each

1. For mild swelling of feet or ankles:
  - Lie down and elevate feet.
  - Rest on your left side.
  - Wear support stockings throughout the day.
  - Drink eight glasses of water daily.
2. Always feeling too warm:
  - Dress lightly or in layers that can be shed as needed.
  - Shower AM and PM.
  - Use deodorant.
3. Clumsiness:
  - Wear flat shoes.
  - Be careful on stairs.
  - Go more slowly.
4. Backache:
  - Rest.
  - Apply gentle heat with a warm moist towel placed in a plastic bag.
  - Back rub.
5. Itchy
  - Use any lotion you choose.
  - Know that nothing will prevent stretch marks.
  - For severe itching, ask health care provider about medication.
6. Vivid dreams or nightmares:
  - These are common and are not harmful to you or baby.
  - Could be an expression of personal fears or worries.
7. Leg cramps, especially at night:
  - Never point your toe.
  - When cramp begins, pull toes up toward front of leg and make an 'L' with leg and foot.
  - Hold this position until cramp passes.
8. Shortness of breath:
  - Move about more slowly.
  - Sit and stand tall to give your lungs more room.
9. Varicose veins:
  - Wear support stockings throughout the day.
  - Elevate legs several times daily.
10. Difficulty sleeping:
  - Use multiple pillows to support your body.
  - Limit daytime naps.
  - Be patient.
11. Hemorrhoids:
  - Ask health care provider about over the counter medication.
  - Keep stools soft by eating more fruit, fluids, and fiber.
  - Exercise such as walking keeps the digestive track running more smoothly.
12. Leaking breasts:
  - Can occur anytime in the pregnancy but especially now.
  - Wear pads in bra.
  - Sleep in a bra.
13. Painful fetal movement:
  - Be patient.
  - Try changing positions.
  - Sometimes getting on hands and knees helps.
14. Indigestion:
  - Small frequent meals.
  - Avoid spicy, greasy foods.
  - Don't lay down with full stomach.
  - Ask health care provider about antacids.
15. Achy, heaviness in pelvis or hips:
  - Get lots of rest.
  - Move about slowly and carefully.
16. Frequent urination and leaky bladder:
  - Ask your health care provider about Kegel exercises.
  - Mini-pads.
  - Be patient.

## Third Trimester

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See Page 2 for "12 Do's and 5 Don'ts in the Third Trimester"

## 18 Third Trimester Discomforts and Comfort Measures for Each (Continued)

### 17. Braxton-Hicks Contractions:

These are essentially painless uterine tightenings sometimes called practice contractions.

They do NOT come at regular intervals that can be timed, i.e., five minutes apart.

Stop what you are doing, take a few deep breaths, and wait for it to pass.

Drink plenty of fluids and rest when you are tired.

Any contractions that come at regular intervals that you can time with a clock or watch should be reported whether or not they hurt.

### 18. Round Ligament Spasms:

This is a sharp shooting pain from either side of the uterus down into the groin or thigh.

Ask your health care provider about pelvic tilt exercises. These may realign the uterus over the pelvis and decrease the frequency of spasms.

Change positions slowly.

Get off your feet and rest.

## 11 Warning Signs to Report Immediately:

1. Bright red vaginal bleeding.
2. Sudden gush or steady trickle of fluid (water) from the vagina.
3. Sudden, severe and constant uterine pain.
4. Loss of or significantly reduced fetal movement.
5. Unusually severe or persistent headache.
6. Frequent visual disturbances.
7. Constant growing upper abdominal pain unrelated to fetal movement.
8. Sudden and severe swelling of the hands, face, or feet.
9. Sudden weight gain of five pounds or more in a week.
10. Very little urination.
11. Any of the following signs of preterm labor (labor signs prior to completing the 37<sup>th</sup> week of the pregnancy):
  - Menstrual-like cramps.
  - Cramping with or without diarrhea.
  - Low back pain.
  - Constant pelvic pressure or heaviness that feels like your baby is pressing down.
  - The uterus gets tight and hard (a contraction) four to six times per hour or more whether or not it is painful or happens at regular intervals.
  - Sudden unexplained dramatic increase in your vaginal discharge especially if blood-tinged or watery.
  - Any vaginal bleeding.

## Third Trimester

### 12 Do's and 5 Don'ts in the Third Trimester

#### Do:

1. Do rest when you are tired or uncomfortable.
2. Do wear flat shoes and move about slowly and carefully taking care to avoid falls.
3. Do eat frequent small meals.
4. Do report any signs of labor that occur prior to completing 37 weeks of pregnancy.
5. Do report any decrease or loss of fetal movement or any of the other third trimester warning signs (see below).
6. Do learn the signs of true vs. false labor.
7. Do call your health practitioner if you are concerned.
8. Do pack your bag and prepare for the trip to the hospital.
9. Do take childbirth preparation classes and take a tour of the hospital.
10. Do write down your goals for your birth experience. This is called a birth plan. Share it with your health care provider.
11. Do read and learn all you can about breastfeeding. Take a breastfeeding class.
12. Do learn about the different methods of contraception that will be available to you after your delivery.

#### Don't:

1. Don't over do it. Eat, play, exercise and work in moderation.
2. Don't spend your time worrying. Instead, ask questions, read and prepare.
3. Don't listen to negative comments from family, friends, and strangers regarding your size or your shape or the length of your pregnancy.
4. Don't plan to travel far from your health care provider in the third trimester.
5. Don't try to drive yourself to the hospital while you are in labor.

